



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
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California National Guard Black Hawk Helicopters Join Firefight in Southern California

San Diego – As firefighters continue to battle wildfires in the San Diego region, specially trained helicopter units from the California National Guard have been activated to assist in the firefight. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services has requested the deployment of these resources under the direction of Adjutant General of the California National Guard Maj. General David S. Baldwin. Strong Santa Ana winds and dry fuel conditions throughout the region have ignited nearly a dozen fires that are currently threatening lives and property.

California Army Guard helicopter crews are working in coordination with the CAL FIRE and local firefighting crews in accordance with the Statewide Mutual Aid System that cuts across military, state and regional levels.

"Having these helicopters available at a moment's notice to respond to these vicious fires is invaluable to the State of California," said Cal OES Director Mark Ghilarducci. "Our mutual system gives us the flexibility to reach out to the California National Guard as partners in emergency management and support our local fire responders already in the fight."

Four UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and crews from the California Army National Guard have been activated and are standing by at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos to support Cal Fire in battling wildfires across Southern California. Each Black Hawk is equipped with a 660-gallon water bucket and their specialized crews are capable of functioning in a medevac capacity as well with an onboard hoist for extracting injured personnel from rugged terrain.

"With California's current drought conditions, we knew the fight would start early this year," said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, Adjutant General of the California National Guard. "When the lives and property of our fellow citizens are on the line, this is when our tireless interagency coordination with CAL FIRE and CAL OES pays great dividends. Together we stand ready to answer the call."

In 2013, California Army and Air National Guard aircraft dropped nearly 1.5 million gallons of retardant and water during nearly 1,500 aerial drops, predominantly across California and the Western States.

"These California National Guard helicopters were activated so they can be immediately available to assist us in this firefight should they be needed," said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director. "In light

of the conditions, these helicopters provide an even greater depth of resources for incident commanders to draw from.”

As a member of the state’s mutual aid system, California National Guard aircraft and specially trained personnel are routinely utilized and deployed by the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services to respond and support to a wide range of emergencies including wildfires, search and rescue missions and other disasters man-made or natural disasters. This multi-agency coordination and resource sharing effort provides an efficient and effective way to combat the state’s most difficult wildfires.